

# What makes a house part of the land?

BY DONNA HOFFMAN

Landscaping is a major asset realtors use to help sell a property, and developers often include the cost of landscaping in the budget of a new home. They know buyers are not just purchasing a roof over their heads but want a place to call home and perhaps raise a family and a sanctuary from the outside world.

A house needs landscaping to become a part of the land. Landscaping gives a return on investment and provides visual appeal. Landscaping can provide protection in the form of windbreaks and snowdrift development in the harshest cold, as well as shade on the hottest days. For the family living on a parcel of land, landscaping might provide privacy and barriers from noise, traffic and unsightly views.

## DIY or Get Professional Help

An initial landscape for a new home site may cost between 10 to 20 percent of the total value, and a landscape retrofit or rejuvenation could run about 15 percent of the property value. Often, a home with no landscaping, however, will sit on the market. Homeowners can get ahead of the game by planning and developing their home's landscape for their own enjoyment. If well maintained, an attractive landscape pays back the investment by helping the home sell and providing a refuge for current and future owners.

The green industry is full of creative and hardworking professionals ready to help homeowners develop a beautiful and useful landscape. However, with a bit of research on plant materials and how the weather and climate interact on the site, as well as good planning for how the space will be used, landscaping can be a good DIY project. For families, it could be a great way to get younger members involved, as well as train them to become good homeowners in the future.



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## Beautiful, Prosperous Communities

Individual homeowners investing in their own landscape contribute to a well landscaped neighborhood. As more neighborhoods develop good landscaping, which over time matures, these contribute to well landscaped communities and towns. Property values increase, and the community becomes more welcoming to new residents and businesses adding jobs.

All this potential is unlocked when homeowners sit down, perhaps with other family members, and consider how much space is needed for the following:

- Services, including utilities and parking
- Storage of tools, equipment and toys
- Private spaces, usually the back yard and gardens
- Public space, usually the front yard and driveway

The answers guide decisions about plants, trees and shrubs and placement to meet the identified needs. From that, a plan takes shape.

## Maturity and Renewal

From small city lots to large rural homesteads, the land provides limits and potential for specific uses, which may change over the lifetimes and succession of owners. Mature landscapes provide more shade and better windbreaks, but they also benefit from change and renewal. Maintenance projects can bring a new look to any area.

A well planned and maintained landscape integrates a home with its grounds, provides opportunities for outdoor enjoyment and a sanctuary from the outside world. Call your local UW Extension educator to learn more about enhancing yours.

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**Donna Hoffman is the county horticulturist in the Natrona County office of the University of Wyoming Extension. Contact her at (307) 235-9400 or [dhoffman@natronacounty-wy.gov](mailto:dhoffman@natronacounty-wy.gov).**

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